

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 22, 2014

Agenda Item: 2014 & 2015 Furbearer Seasons and 2014 Quotas - Proposed

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

Background

Furbearer season structure is defined by F&W Commission rule every two years. Furbearer quotas are set annually. Proposed season structure changes for 2014 and 2015 and annual quotas for 2014 are addressed below. All other season elements and quotas are proposed unchanged from 2013.

FWP harvest data, field observations, and furbearer trapper input indicate that river otter are stable to increasing in Trapping District 1 and 2. Annual otter reproduction appears healthy, the proportion of adult females in the adult harvest is low, and harvest quotas have been met quickly in recent years. FWP proposes to moderately increase the otter harvest quota for Trapping District 1 from 21 to 23 and Trapping District 2 from 20 to 25, while retaining the per trapper bag limit at two otter.

Based upon new efforts at population reconstructing using real harvest information, FWP proposes to reduce the 2014 bobcat quota from 300 to 250 in Trapping District 5.

Other proposed changes include expanding trapping opportunity to the Fish Creek WMA, adjusting the deadline to apply for WMA trapping opportunities from September 30 to September 15; clarifying an “open road” on public land in setback definitions as having any type of motorized use at any time of year; reducing the required reporting period for incidental capture of dogs from 48 to 24 hours; requiring trappers to be able to identify bobcat skulls with the corresponding pelts during pelt inspection; and for consistency adjust the start time for chasing bobcats in areas where the lion season has closed from two hours before sunrise to the more standard ½ hour before sunrise.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Regional FWP staff attends the annual District meetings of the Montana Trappers Association each spring. The public comment period for any proposal approved for public comment will run through 5 p.m., Monday, June 23, with final adoptions at the July Commission meeting.

Alternative and Analysis

Proposals provide sound furbearer management to include trapping with consideration of comments and concerns from other user groups. The intent is to reasonably *share* the landscape, associated resources and opportunities to the extent possible. Proposals for otter and bobcat quotas include current information assembled by regional FWP staff.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale: Recommend maintaining 2013 structure and quotas except for the proposed changes above. This is consistent with existing information and represents reasonable and appropriate consideration of user conflict and the continued presence of contemporary data in furbearer management that include trapping.

Proposed Motion

I move to approve for public comment the proposed 2014 and 2015 furbearer seasons and 2014 quotas.